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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA

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INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 002022

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SUBJECT: BAHRAIN: IRAQ STUDY GROUP REPORT

REF: STATE 196230

Classified By: DCM Susan L. Ziadeh for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) In the course of a December 7 meeting with MFA Assistant Under Secretary for Coordination and Follow Up Shaikh Abdul Aziz bin Mubarak Al Khalifa covering several subjects, Pol/Econ Chief raised the release of the Iraq Study Group (ISG) report a day earlier and asked for his reaction. Shaikh Abdul Aziz said that while he had not yet read the report, he fully agreed with what he had heard. He encouraged the USG to implement as much of the report as possible. Bahraini policy, he said, had long held that the Israel/Palestinian issue goes hand-in-hand with the situation in Iraq. Reengagement on the Palestinian track will lead to better cooperation on a range of regional issues.

¶2. (C) Shaikh Abdul Aziz asserted that Bahrain wants a strong, united, independent Iraq that uses its own resources to build the country. Iraq is a rich country and Iraqis are proud people, he said, and it is difficult for them to accept charity. The Iraqi government should shoulder its responsibilities and do what needs to be done. Shaikh Abdul Aziz said the ISG report offers a new approach to Iraq. If the United States pulls out of Iraq without having tried all avenues of engagement and cooperation, it will have lost the war militarily. But if the U.S. goes the extra mile and works with Iraq and its neighbors politically, economically, and diplomatically, it has a much greater chance of succeeding. However, if the Iraqi government and people do not take advantage of the opportunity offered to them, the United States can leave Iraq "with its head held high" knowing it had done all it could. Shaikh Abdul Aziz praised the U.S. government for its transparency in dealing with the Iraq issue.

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